

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGRE-00 SP-02 ICA-11 AID-05 EB-08
NSC-05 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-07 OMB-01 CEA-01 L-03
H-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 /083 W
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R 191348Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6254
INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMCONSUL KRAKOW POUCH
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL POZNAN POUCH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WARSAW 6122

EO 11652GDS
TAGS: EPAP, PINT, SOCI, PL
SUBJ: SEVERE MEAT SHORTAGES REPORTED IN PROVINCES AND
THREATENING WARSAW; RUMORED STIRRINGS OF SUPPORT
FOR OLSZOWSKI AS EVENTUAL PARTY LEADER

1. SUMMARY: SEVERAL REPORTS FROM DIVERSE SOURCES
DESCRIBE SEVERE MEAT SHORTAGES NOW IN IMPORTANT PROVINCIAL
CITIES AND THREATENING TO HIT WARSAW. A PARTY SOURCE
SAID DESPONDENCY OVER THE ECONOMY IS LEADING TO
A QUIET BUILD-UP OF SUPPORT AMONG YOUNGER PZPR CADRES
FOR PARTY SECRETARY OLSZOWSKI TO REPLACE GIEREK AS
FIRST SECRETARY. THE SOURCE, HOWEVER, DID NOT THINK
A CHANGE AT THE TOP IS POSSIBLE UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES.
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WE WOULD AGREE, ALTHOUGH A PROLONGED SEVERE MEAT
SHORTAGE, ESPECIALLY IF IT RESULTED IN SIGNIFICANT
PUBLIC UNREST, COULD CHANG THE PICTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A JULY 12 MEETING OF WESTERN EMBASSY POLITICAL
OFFICERS, BOTH THE FRG AND BRITISH PARTICIPANTS SAID
THEIR EMBASSIES ASSESSED THE CURRENT MEAT SUPPLY

SITUATION IN POLAND AS EXTREMELY BAD AND GETTING WORSE. THEY SAID THE APPEARANCE OF MEATS IN LARGER QUANTITIES AND BETTER QUALITY IN THE "COMMERCIAL" STORES SINCE THE RECENT PRICE AND ALLOCATION INCREASES THERE IS DECEPTIVE BECAUSE THE REGULAR STORES NOW ARE ALMOST ENTIRELY BARREN MOST OF THE TIME.

3. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, A POLISH ORBIS TOUR GUIDE TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER RECENTLY THAT MEAT SUPPLIES ARE ALMOST NON-EXISTENT IN MOST SHOPS IN THE GDANSK/GDYNIA, SZCZECIN, POZNAN AND LODZ AREAS. THE GUIDE SAID HE WAS NOT CERTAIN ABOUT MEAT SUPPLIES IN SPECIAL FACTORY, PLANT OR SHIPYARD STORES IN THOSE AREAS, BUT HIS GENERAL IMPRESSION WAS THAT THEY WERE JUST AS CRITICALLY SHORT. HE CHARACTERIZED THESE CONDITIONS AS CONTRASTING SHARPLY TO THE APPARENT EASING OF TIGHT SUPPLIES IN SOME OF WARSAW'S COMMERCIAL STORES. HE SAID, FOR INSTANCE, THAT DURING THE WEEK OF JULY 10 HIS WIFE FOUND POLISH HAMS, A VARIETY OF QUALITY SAUSAGES AND SOME REASONABLY GOOD BEEF AT A WARSAW COMMERCIAL SHOP AND SHE ONLY HAD TO STAND IN LINE FOR TWO HOURS. BECAUSE OF THE WIDE SELECTION AND QUANTITY AVAILABLE, SHE ALSO PURCHASED MANY ADDITIONAL CUTS FOR IN-LAWS IN LODZ WHO HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN SUCH MEAT FOR MANY MONTHS.

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4. A RELATIVELY AFFLUENT AND SOMEWHAT INFLUENTIAL POLISH COUPLE PREDICTED LAST WEEK THAT THE IMPROVEMENT OF MEAT SUPPLIES IN WARSAW WHICH HAS FOLLOWED THE PRICE RISE WILL BE SHORT-LIVED. UP TO NOW, THEY SAID, WITH THE RIGHT CONTACTS AND ENOUGH DOLLARS IT HAD NOT BEEN TOO DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO GET ADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF ACCEPTABLE MEATS. HOWEVER, THEY HAD HEARD FROM FRIENDS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY THAT THE SITUATION WAS EXTREMELY CRITICAL, VND THEY EXPECTED THE CAPITAL SOON TO FEEL THE SAME VERY REAL SHORTAGES.

5. A PARTY MEMBER AND DEPUTY DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR IN THE POLISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, WHO CLAIMS ACCESS TO THE PZPR CENTRAL COMMITTEE, TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JULY 14 THAT THERE WAS A FEELING OF GENERAL DESPONDENCY WITHIN MANY RANKS OF PARTY CADRES OVER POLAND'S CURRENT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 WARSAW 6122

ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. HE SAID THE SENSE OF HOPE
AND OPPORTUNITY OF THE EARLY '70S HAS VANISHED AND
THAT THERE IS NOW A FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS WITHOUT
PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT. AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW BAD
THINGS HAVE BECOME, THE SOURCE CITED WHAT HE TERMED
THE "TERRIBLE" SUPPLY CONDITIONS IN THE GENERAL COMMISSARY
OPEN TO PZPR CENTRAL COMMITTEE SUPPORT FUNCTIONARIES.
HE SAID EVERYTIME HE HAS GONE TO THE COMMISSARY
IN RECENT WEEKS HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO FIND ANY QUALITY
SAUSAGES, HAM, OR PORK AND ONLY LIMITED CUTS OF POOR
QUALITY BEEF. HE HAS FOUND THIS SITUATION DIFFICULT
TO EXPLAIN TO HIS WIFE, WHO NOW WONDERS WHAT BENEFITS
HIS POSITION AND ACCESS ACTUALLY AFFORD THEM.

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6. THE SOURCE SAID MANY YOUNGER PARTY CADRES, QUIETLY
AND SECRETLY BUT GENUINELY SUPPORT PARTY SECRETARY
STEFAN OLSZOWSKI AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CURRENT FIRST
SECRETARY GIEREK. UNFORTUNATELY, HE CONTINUED, PRESENT

CIRCUMSTANCES IN POLAND MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY CHANGE TO TAKE PLACE AT THE TOP. THE SOURCE HOPED, NEVERTHELESS, THAT IN THE NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN SOME WAY TO MAKE CHANGES. IN EXPECTATION OF SUCH AN OPPORTUNITY, HE SAID, OLSZOWSKI IS BIDDING HIS TIME UNTIL CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT FOR THE ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES AND SOLUTIONS HE CAN PROVIDE.

7. COMMENT: WE FIND THESE REPORTS OF PRESENT AND ANTICIPATED MEAT SHORTAGES, COMING AS THEY DO FROM DIVERSE SOURCES, IMPRESSIVELY CONSISTENT. THE REPORTS IN PARA THREE CONCERN SOME SENSITIVE PARTY OF THE COUNTRY. ANY PROLONGED FAILURE OF THE MEAT SUPPLY, EG, IN GDANSK/GDYNIA AND SZCZECIN, WOULD BE LIKELY TO PRODUCE JOB ACTIONS BY THE DOCK AND SHIPYARD WORKERS AND COULD BRING THEM INTO THE STREETS. IF SHORTAGES THIS SERIOUS REACHED WARSAW, LABOR UNREST WOULD NOT SEEM UNLIKELY HERE AS WELL.

8. A WELL-CONNECTION FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER LAST MONTH THAT HE HAD HEARD OLSZOWSKI WAS MOUNTING A QUIET, VIRTUALLY COVERT CAMPAIGN ULTIMATELY AIMED AT UNSEATING GIEREK, BUT THAT THE LATTER WAS AWARE OF THIS AND TAKING TACTICAL STEPS TO NEUTRALIZE HIS POTENTIAL CHALLENGER. SOME WARSAW POLITICAL OBSERVERS, EVEN ASSUMING THIS RUMOR HAS A FACTUAL BASIS, DISCOUNT OLSZOWSKI'S CHANCES BECAUSE OF HIS LACK OF A POLITICAL BASE. THE REPORT IN PARA SIX ABOVE LENDS SOME CREDENCE TO THE CORRESPONDENT'S STORY AND INDICATES WHERE SUCH A BASE MIGHT EVENTUALLY
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BE ESTABLISHED. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE MEAT SHORTAGE WOULD NEED TO BE PROLONGED AND SEVERE, AND UNREST SUBSTANTIAL, BEFORE GIEREK'S HOLD ON THE REINS OF POWER COULD BE SERIOUSLY THREATENED, PARTICULARLY AS LONG AS THE FIRST SECRETARY CONTINUED TO ENJOY HIS PRESENT APPARENTLY SOLID SOVIET SUPPORT. END COMMENT. SCHAUFELLE

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